Strengthspotting and Interpersonal Relationships: Development of the Japanese Version of the Strengthspotting Scale

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Abstract—**This study aimed to develop a Japanese version of the strengthspotting scale and examine the relationship between strengthspotting and relationships with others, as well as factors that related to an interpersonal relationship. A Japanese version of strengthspotting scale was developed and administered with six other scales of interpersonal factors to 264 college students. The results indicate that the Japanese version of strengthspotting scale has sufficient reliability and validity. Furthermore, the results revealed a relationship between each of the five domains of strengthspotting and interpersonal factors: communication skills, affiliation motives, shyness, optimism and pessimism, and positive relationships with others. The study provides a basis for conducting further empirical research and practice on strengthspotting in Japan.**

Keywords-strengths; personal strengths; strengthspotting; strengths identification; relationships; positive psychology

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Positive Outcomes of Using Strengths

As the field of positive psychology develops, research and practice on personal strengths are becoming increasingly popular. There are a number of studies that show the benefits of using strengths. For example, people who use strengths more frequently have higher levels of happiness and lower levels of depression [1]. Furthermore, they experience lower levels of stress [2] and indicate higher levels of resilience [3]. Other studies demonstrate that people who use their strengths more often show higher levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, vitality, and well-being [4, 5, 6]. Moreover, people who use their strengths and strive to achieve their goals are more likely to achieve those goals and feel satisfied and fulfilled upon completion [7]. In the field of industrial/organizational psychology and coaching, previous studies have presented the relationship between the use of strengths and better performance, job satisfaction, work engagement [8], and so on. For example, business leaders who focus on developing themselves and their teams on the basis of their strengths are more effective and successful [9].When a leader focuses on the strengths of his/herself and their team members, they are more likely to perform better and stay with the company longer [10]. Based on this empirical evidence, the use of personal strengths is recommended to live a better and more fulfilling life.

B. Ways of Identifying Strengths

To use strengths, it is essential to be aware of what one's strengths are. Previous studies have revealed that simply realizing one's strengths can be beneficial, as it can increase self-confidence and strengthen a belief in continual growth [11]. There is a variety of ways to discover one's strengths—including use of formal psychometric assessment tools, strengths-based interviews, casual daily observations, and everyday conversations. The methods of identifying strengths could be classified into two broad categories: the top-down and the bottom-up approach [12, 13].

The top-down approach employs pre-determined sets of strengths, which asks respondents to evaluate the presence or absence of particular pre-determined strengths, and further evaluates the degree to which those strengths may exist in the individual. This approach includes the use of psychometric strengths assessment tools such as StrengthsFinder [14, 15], VIA Inventory of Strengths [16], and Realise2 [8], and formal interview methods such as strengths-based interviewing [12]. Using these methods to identify strengths has some advantages. For example, pre-determined classification of strengths and assessments are very useful because they can provide people with a readily available, fundamental framework of understanding strengths and a shared language for discussing and describing them. As only approximately one-third of the people actually know what their own strengths are [17, 18], it can be a good basis to get to know about their personal strengths. However, this approach also has some limitations. The biggest drawback would be that it cannot assess a strength that is not pre-determined. As the assessment of strengths in this manner is inherently limited, it may not be very effective to capture one's strengths in a comprehensive manner.

The bottom-up approach relies more on personal stories and experiences to evaluate one's strengths. It employs open-ended conversation and daily observational techniques. Dependable Strengths Articulation Process [19, 20], Conversational Strengths Articulation Process [21], Identification of A-Grade Activities [22], the Individual Strengths Assessment [12], and more casual observations and conversations in everyday life would be classified in this category. Compared with the former approach, these ways of identifying strengths are more an open-ended, free-flowing kind of assessment of strengths, in which people describe what their strengths are with their own words. As these techniques are closely related to personal history and experiences, people are able to identify and assess a wide range of strengths.

C. The Concept of Strengthspotting and the Strengthspotting Scale

The easiest way to identify strengths that everyone can practice is in simple, daily conversation and in the observation of strengths. Spotting strengths in oneself and others is called "strengthspotting" [12]. Like other personal characteristics, there are some signs of strengths that have been identified. Linley [12] described the signs of strengths as following: "a real sense of energy and engagement," "losing a sense of time," "rapid learning," "repeated pattern of successful performance," "exemplary levels of performance (especially performance that evokes the respect and admiration of others)," "always seeming to get the tasks done that require using the strengths," "prioritizing tasks that require using the strengths over tasks that do not," "feeling a yearning to use the strengths," and "being irrevocably drawn to do things that play to the strength." To spot strengths in oneself and others, there is no need to have special tools or an interview guide; however, one can find strengths simply by looking for these signs.

Looking for strengths in others is exciting and worthwhile in itself; however, there are more benefits than that. As Linley and Burns [23] described, it helps people look for, be aware of, and acknowledge strengths, in general. This awareness of the positives and strengths around them is likely to enhance their own sense of well-being. Moreover, by looking for strengths in others, rather than seeing the negatives, they are likely to form the basis for more positive relationships with others around them. Getting into the enjoyable habit of spotting strengths in others means they are more likely to spot strengths in themselves [23].

Linley, Garcea, Hill, Minhas, Trenier, and Willars [24] conceptualized strengthspotting and developed the strengthspotting scale. Accordnig to them, the strengthspotting concept comprises five components: the ability to spot strengths, the emotional reaction to strengthspotting, the motivation to identify strengths in others, the application of strengthspotting, and the frequency of practicing strengthspotting. Based on this concept, they developed a measurement to assess strengthspotting. Their strengthspotting scale is a 20-item questionnaire that includes four items for each of the five components. The scale is translated in other languages, such as Turkish [26], and used across countries.

D. Strengthspotting and Interpersonal Relationships

Identifying and using strengths in relationships with others is shown to have many benefits. For instance, Komazawa and Ishimura revealed that using strengths in relationships with others actually increases the use of strengths in general as well as satisfaction with interpersonal relationships [25]. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the relationship between strengthspotting and positive interpersonal relationships is examined.

Since strengthspotting is often practiced interpersonally, it is also assumed to be related to various interpersonal factors. However, strengthspotting and those interpersonal factors have not yet been comprehensively examined. It is expected that strengthspotting is related not only to positive interpersonal relationships but also to factors that play important roles in the process of building those relationships. For example, communication skills that are the basis for relationship with others can be assumed to be related to strengthspotting. Fujimoto and Daibo's Communication Skill Model [27] has six communication skills (expressivity, assertiveness, decipherer ability, other acceptance, self-control, and regulation of interpersonal relationship) that are categorized into a two-level hierarchical structure: basic level (expressivity, decipherer ability, and self-control) and interpersonal level (assertiveness, other acceptance, and regulation of interpersonal relationship). These skills are also components of three systems: encode system (expressivity and assertiveness), decode system (decipherer ability and other acceptance), and management system (self-control and regulation of interpersonal relationship). We hypothesize that strengthspotting—especially ability, frequency, and the application of strengthspotting—are related to communication skills as those are behavioral aspects of strengthspotting that are directly related to communication skills. Furthermore, we hypothesize that specific interpersonal communication skills have stronger relationships with strengthspotting as strengthspotting is often practiced in interpersonal situations by focusing and looking for signs of strengths from what others do and say.

In addition to communication skills, one's attitudes toward interpersonal relationships can affect some dimensions of strengthspotting. Especially, affiliation motives are said to be related to interpersonal relationships [28]. Sugiura examined how two types of affiliation motives, sensitivity to rejection and affiliative tendency, are related to interpersonal alienation and revealed that although the two types of affiliation motives are positively correlated to each other, sensitivity to rejection is positively related to interpersonal alienation and affiliative tendency is negatively related to interpersonal alienation [28]. As affiliation motives, especially the affiliative tendency, are related to the need for connection with others, which serves as the basis for positive interpersonal relationships, they can be assumed to be related to strengthspotting as well.

One's beliefs and cognitive patterns also influence the interpersonal relationships he/she has. For example, optimistic people are more satisfied with their interpersonal relationships [29]. Optimistic people seem to be more positive, healthier [30], and less depressive when they experience stressful events [31]. As they can see more positives in everything, it is hypothesized

to be positively related to strengthspotting. In contrast, it has been shown that shy people tend to be less active and more anxious in interpersonal relationship and have poorer mental health [32, 33]. As shyness is considered an inhibitor for interpersonal relationship, it can be assumed to be negatively related to strengthspotting.

In this study, these previously mentioned factors, which are considered to play important roles in interpersonal relationships, were examined to determine whether they are related to strengthspotting.

E. The Purpose of the Study

This study aims to develop a Japanese version of the strengthspotting scale, and as mentioned earlier, to examine the relationship between strengthspotting and positive interpersonal relationships, as well as the various factors that are related to building and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. In this study, we focus on strengthspotters' communication skills, motivation toward interpersonal relationship, shyness, tendency to focus on the positive, and perceived positive relationships with others.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

There number of participants who volunteered to participate in this study were 264 college students (146 male, 118 female, M = 20.03 years, SD = 1.16). They were recruited from introductory psychology classes and a research method class in December 2013.

B. Measures

Participants were asked to complete the following six scales: Japanese version of Strengthspotting Scale; "positive relationships with others," which is a subscale of Japanese version of Psychological Well-Being Scale; communication skills scale called "ENDCOREs"; the Affiliation Motives Scale; the Japanese Optimism and Pessimism Scale; and Trait Shyness Scale.

1) Japanese version of strengthspotting scale: the strengthspotting scale [24] was translated into Japanese. It was back translated by two bilingual psychologists and revised to create the Japanese version. The Japanese version on strengthspotting scale comprises 20 items—four items for each of the five domains—in alignment with the original. It uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

2) Positive relationships with others: This is a subscale from the Japanese version of the Psychological Well-Being Scale [34], which was originally developed by Ryff [35].The scale was based on Ryff's multi-dimentional model of psychological well-being [34]. It comprises six subscales that correspond to six dimensions: personal growth, purpose in life, autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relationships with others. In this study, a subscale of positive relationships with others is used. It is a 6-item self-report scale and uses a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The score of the subscale ranges from 6 to 36, with higher scores indicating a greater sense of having warm, reliable interpersonal relationships.

3) ENDCOREs: this scale is a 24-item self-report scale that measures variety of skills of verbal and non-verbal communication [27]. The scale uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "very good at" to "very bad at." ENDCOREs comprises six communication skills including three basic skills—expressivity, decipherer ability, and self-control—and three interpersonal skills—other-acceptance, assertiveness, and regulation of interpersonal relationship. Each subscale has four items. The scores on each subscales range from 1 to 7, using the average score of each item.

4) The Affiliation Motives Scale: this scale is a 18-item self-report scale that measures two affiliation motives: sensitivity to rejection and affiliative tendency [28]. Each subscale has nine items. It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "disagree" to "agree." This study focuses on how strengthspotting is related to motives to establish and maintain friendly relationships with others.

5) The Japanese Optimism and Pessimism Scale (J-OPS): this scale is a 20-item self-report scale that measures the extent of being optimistic versus being pessimistic [36]. It uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." It comprises two subscales: optimism and pessimism, which have ten items each.

6) Trait Shyness Scale (TSS): this scale is a 16-item self-report scale that measures the extent of being shy in a wide range of situation across time [32]. It uses a 5-point Liker scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The score of the scale range from 16 to 80. Higher the score indicate more shy the person is.

C. Procedure

This study was conducted with the approval of the ethics committee of Tokyo Seitoku University. The survey was administered during class time. Attendees of the classes were provided with the study's outline and confidential methods for data processing, and they were also informed that their cooperation was voluntary and would not influence their grade in the class. Individuals who expressed interest in participating provided informed consent and were asked to complete the survey.

II. RESULTS

A. *Factor Analyses of the Japanese Version of Strengthspotting Scale*

Confirmatory factor analyses, as described by Linley and colleagues [24], were used to examine the goodness of fit of each domain. The results of the goodness of fit for each domain can be found in Table I. The detailed results and internal consistency reliabilities are presented in Table II. As shown in Table III, intercorrelations between the domains were all significant, and ranged from $r = 0.61$ (Emotional - Application) to $r = 0.84$ (Ability - Frequency).

TABLE I. THE GOODNESS OF FIT

Domain	X²/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Ability	2.558 *	0.989	0.947	0.994	0.080
Emotional	0.073 *	1.000	0.999	1.000	0.000
Frequency	1.150 *	0.998	0.977	1.000	0.025
Motivation	0.971 *	0.981	0.809	0.973	0.189
Application	3.827 *	0.992	0.923	0.990	0.108

a. * $p < .05$

TABLE II. JAPANESE VERSION OF STRENGTHSPOTTING SCALE FACTOR LOADINGS

Items	Factor loadings
能力 (Ability; $\alpha = 0.87$)	
6 私にはうまく人の強みを見出す能力がある I am very effective at spotting strengths in people	0.86
16 私は人の強みを見出すことに長けている I am skilled at spotting people's strengths	0.85
1 私は、人の強みをたやすく特定することができる I am able to identify people's strengths with ease	0.79
11 私は、人の強みを特定することは簡単なことだと思う I find it easy to identify people's strengths	0.66
感情的反応 (Emotional; $\alpha = 0.88$)	
17 人の強みを見出すことは、私をいい気分にさせる Spotting strengths in people makes me feel happy	0.90
7 誰かの強みに気がつくと気分がいい It makes me feel good when I notice a strength in someone	0.83
2 私は、人の強みを見つけることで、とてもわくわくする I get a real buzz from identifying strengths in people	0.76
12 私は、人が自分の強みに目を向けるのを助けることで、深い充実感が得られる I get a deep sense of fulfillment from helping people to see what their strengths are	0.74
頻度 (Frequency; $\alpha = 0.86$)	
8 どこにいても、何をしていても、私は気がつくと人の強みを見出している No matter where I am or what I am doing, I find that I am spotting strengths in people	0.96
18 私は、様々な場面において、気がつくと人の強みを特定している I find myself identifying strengths in people in a wide variety of situations	0.81
13 私はいつも、相手にその人自身の強みについて話していることがある I find myself telling people about their strengths all the time	0.74
3 私は、いつも人の強みに気がついている I notice people's strengths all the time	0.69
動機 (Motivation; $\alpha = 0.80$)	
19 人が自身の強みについて理解するのを手伝うことは、私にとってとても重要である Helping people to understand their strengths is deeply important to me	0.92
14 私は、他の人の強みを特定し、それを伸ばしてあげる責任があると強く思っている I believe I have a responsibility to identify and develop strengths in others	0.67
9 人の強みや得意なことに注意を向けることはとても重要である It is very important to pay attention to people's strengths and what they do well	0.58
4 私は、常に他の人の強みに注意を向けている必要があると強く思っている I believe I should be on the lookout for other people's strengths	0.57
応用 (Application; $\alpha = 0.79$)	
10 私は、しばしば人に、強みを活かしたり伸ばしたりするために提案をする I give people suggestions for strengths use and development frequently	0.77
5 私はこの一ヶ月間に、友人や同僚に対し、新しい課題に取り組む際、試しに強みを使ってみるよう勧めたことがある In the past month, I have suggested to a friend or colleague to try out their strengths on a new task	0.74
20 私の強みに対する洞察力は、その人が最高の仕事をするために役立つので、高く評価されている People appreciate my strengths insights because my insights help them to do their best work	0.63
15 私は、誰がどんな仕事・作業に最適で、それがなぜかが常に分かる気がする I always seem to know who would be the best person for which job and why	

correlation coefficients are presented in Table IV. The correlation between each strengthspotting domain of and positive interpersonal relationship were significant, ranging from $r = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$ (Motivation) to $r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$ (Emotional). Ability, frequency, and application domains of strengthspotting were significantly correlated with all communication skills. Furthermore, at the interpersonal level of communication skills, assertiveness and regulation of interpersonal relationship were significantly correlated with all domains of strengthspotting. However, other acceptance was only significantly correlated with ability, frequency, and application domains of strengthspotting. Correlations between affiliative tendency and each domain of strengthspotting were significant. Correlation between sensitivity to rejection and

TABLE III. INTERCORRELATIONS OF DOMAINS

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
D1: Ability	-				
D2: Emotional	0.63	-			
D3: Frequency	0.84	0.70	-		
D4: Motivation	0.64	0.79	0.75	-	
D5: Application	0.70	0.61	0.75	0.70	-

a. All correlations significant at $p < 0.001$

B. Correlation between Strengthspotting Domain and Interpersonal Factors

The correlation between each of five domains of strengthspotting scale and other scales were calculated. The

TABLE IV. CORRELATION BETWEEN STRENGTHSPOTTING SCALE AND OTHER SCALES

	Strengthspotting Scale									
Scales and Subscales	Ability		Emotional		Frequency		Motivation		Application	
Psychological Well-Being Scale										
Positive Relationship with Others	0.33	**	0.39	**	0.29	**	0.28	**	0.20	**
ENDCOREs										
Expressivity	0.17	**	0.14	*	0.13	*	0.15	*	0.13	*
Assertiveness	0.30	**	0.20	**	0.30	**	0.22	**	0.24	**
Decipherer Ability	0.38	**	0.23	**	0.30	**	0.24	**	0.31	**
Other Acceptance	0.29	**	0.11		0.22	**	0.11		0.24	**
Self Control	0.31	**	0.43	**	0.33	**	0.37	**	0.23	**
Regulation of Interpersonal Relationship	0.34	**	0.34	**	0.35	**	0.36	**	0.33	**
Affiliation Motivation Scale										
Sensitivity to Rejection	0.11		0.19	**	0.17	**	0.19	**	0.10	
Affiliative Tendency	0.27	**	0.37	**	0.32	**	0.30	**	0.24	**
Optimism and Pessimism Scale										
Optimism	0.25	**	0.20	**	0.23	**	0.22	**	0.19	**
Pessimism	−0.18	**	−0.02		−0.05		0.01		−0.02	
Shyness Trait Scale	−0.24	**	−0.14	*	−0.23	**	−0.14	*	−0.28	**

a. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$

strengthspotting was weaker and more mixed results were obtained. Only emotional, frequency, and motivation domains of strengthspotting were related to sensitivity to rejection. Optimism was significantly correlated with all domains of strengthspotting, as hypothesized. Also, as expected, shyness was negatively correlated with all domains of strengthspotting.

C. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Based on the score obtained from the strengthspotting scale, participants were divided into three groups: good strengthspotters, average strengthspotters, and poor strengthspotters. To do so, the mean score of each domain was calculated, and participants who scored above average for each of five domains were placed into the "good strengthspotters" group, participants who scored below average for each of five domains were placed into the "poor strengthspotters" group, and the others were placed into the "average strengthspotters" group. One-way ANOVA was then conducted on group membership. Compared with average and poor strengthspotters, good strengthspotters tend to be better at communication, more optimistic and less shy, have a higher affiliation motivation, and have more positive relationships with others (Table V).

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TABLE V.   LEVELS OF STRENGTHSPOTTER AND INTERPERSONAL FACTORS（$N = 254$)

	Good Strengthspotter $N = 80$		Average Strengthspotter $N = 108$		Poor Strengthspotter $N = 66$		$F =$		Effect Size $\eta^2 =$
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*			
Psychological Well-Being									
Positive Relationship with Others	20.02	3.94	18.95	4.48	16.98	4.76	8.93	***	0.07
ENDCOREs									
Expressivity	18.13	4.28	18.01	4.22	16.53	4.85	2.95	*	0.02
Assertiveness	16.30	3.93	14.41	4.67	13.44	5.83	6.94	**	0.05
Decipherer Ability	19.54	4.33	18.38	4.31	15.68	5.35	13.15	***	0.10
Other Acceptance	16.44	3.69	14.83	4.37	14.32	5.20	4.82	**	0.04
Self-Control	20.93	3.96	19.94	3.72	17.71	5.00	11.18	***	0.08
Regulation of Interpersonal Relationship	19.64	3.23	17.62	3.96	15.94	5.59	13.90	***	0.10
Affiliative Motivation									
Sensitivity to Rejection	31.47	7.55	31.19	7.35	29.41	9.92	1.33		0.01
Affiliative Tendency	34.91	6.22	32.36	6.44	29.98	7.86	9.38	***	0.07
Optimism and Pessimism									
Optimism	27.34	5.82	25.40	6.41	24.33	6.92	4.25	**	0.03
Pessimism	21.90	5.67	23.74	7.18	22.95	6.71	1.77		0.02
Shyness Trait	47.53	11.12	53.39	10.85	53.92	13.82	7.14	**	0.06

a. *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05

I. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to develop a Japanese version of the strengthspotting scale and examine the relationship between strengthspotting and interpersonal factors. The results indicate that the Japanese version of strengthspotting scale has sufficient reliability and validity. Furthermore, this Japanese version of the strengthspotting scale can be used in various settings, such as coaching, mentoring, clinical settings, and education.

The results also revealed that each of the five domains of strengthspotting are related to positive interpersonal relationships. People who are good at spotting others' strengths seem to build warm, trustworthy, and positive relationships. As Linley and Burns described [23], their awareness of the positives and strengths around them might enhance their sense of having positive relationships, which is a part of their own well-being.

Interpersonal relationships as well as interpersonal factors seem to be related to strengthspotting. As hypothesized, strengthspotting—especially the ability, frequency, and application dimensions—were positively related to communication skills. Particularly, assertiveness and regulation of interpersonal relationship, which are categorized in interpersonal levels of communication skills [27], were significantly correlated with all dimensions of strengthspotting. However, contrary to our expectations, other acceptance was not significantly related to emotional and motivation dimensions of strengthspotting. Further research is needed to better understand why this is the case. As for affiliation motivation, affiliative tendency was positively correlated with all five domains of strengthspotting. Sensitivity to rejection

was positively related to strengthspotting as well; however, the correlation was weaker than the affiliative tendency. In detail, sensitivity to rejection in interpersonal relationship was significantly correlated with emotional reaction, frequency, and motivation domains of strengthspotting. It could be interpreted that strengthspotting requires more actively motivated interpersonal activity, not just avoiding to be rejected. As expected, optimism was positively correlated with all five domains of strengthspotting. People who are optimistic about the future and expect good things happen to themselves seem to be more likely to focus on the positive in themselves and in others. In contrast, as expected, shyness—which is considered to be an obstacle in interpersonal relationships—was negatively correlated with all domains of strengthspotting.

As the results of ANOVA revealed, people who are good at strengthspotting are also good at communication, have a tendency to seek connections with others, are more optimistic, and are less shy. Overall, strengthspotting seems to be related to many positive interpersonal factors and aids in building positive interpersonal relationships. The results indicate that being aware of, and looking for strengths in others could benefit their communication and enrich their social lives. However, this study has some limitations. We did not investigate every factor that is related to interpersonal relationships. Personality traits of strengthspotters and social desirability could be good examples. Further research is needed to examine other variables that are related to strengthspotting and interpersonal relationships. Also, the participants of this study are limited to psychology college students. Further research with wider sample is needed. Further, it would be beneficial to apply the research findings and strengthspotting scale and to develop intervention programs of cultivating strengthspotting capabilities.

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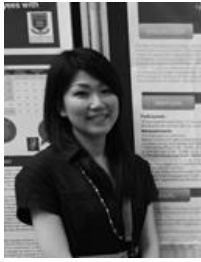
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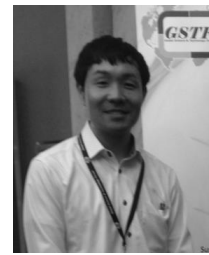
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